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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY BIOGRAPHIC REPORT SECURITY INFORMATION

NAME WIRTH, Josef K. (Dr.)

CASE NO. 9035528
DATE 10 July 1952

NATIONALITY	German	BIRTHDATE	6 September 1879
		BIRTHPLACE	Freiburg
PRESENT POSITION		RACE	
		SEX	Male
LOCATION	West Germany	MARITAL STATUS	Single
		NAME OF SPOUSE	
GEN. OCCUPATION		CHILDREN	
		RELIGION	Catholic
EDUCATION	Ph.D.; Studied mathematics and Natural Sciences, University of Freiburg	POLITICAL AFFILIATION	See remarks
LANGUAGES	French and English	ATTITUDE TOWARDS:	U.S.
HONORS			U.S.S.R. See remarks

CAREER:

1907-1914 Professor, Real Gymnasium, Freiburg.
1911 Town Councillor, Freiburg.
1913 Center Party Deputy, Baden Landtag.
1914-1918 Member, Reichstag.
1918-1920 Minister of Finance, Baden.
1919 Member, German National Assembly; Member, Baden Assembly.
1920-1921 Federal Minister of Finance.
1921-1922 Federal Chancellor, May 1921-November 1922; Minister of Foreign Affairs, October 1921-November 1922.
1922-1929 Withdrew from public service.
1930-1931 Federal Minister of the Interior.
1933 Left Germany.
1933-1948 Travelled to Paris and Washington; Took refuge in Switzerland.
1941-1945 Director, Social-Aid Office, German Democratic Christian Party, Switzerland.
1945 Founded the Demokratischer Deutschland in Switzerland.
1946 Returned to Germany.
1949 Honorary President, Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Badener. 1/2/

REMARKS:

Former German Chancellor Josef K. Wirth was born 6 September 1879 in Freiburg in Breisgau, the son of a printer in the Catholic publishing house Herder and Co.

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NATIONAL ARCHIVES DISCLOSURE ACT
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REMARKS: (Continued)

He attended the Humanistic Gymnasium in Freiburg and did his studies in this city, studying mathematics and natural sciences and receiving his University and High School Teacher's license. He became a high school professor and taking an interest in politics at an early age, joined the German National Party. According to one report he was elected to the German Reichstag in 1913 while another source maintains that he was elected to the Baden Landtag in 1913 served as a Reichstag deputy during World War I 1/2, when he was also said to have been a delegate of the German Red Cross.3/

After the war, Wirth was elected to the German National Assembly and the Baden Assembly, in addition to serving as the Baden Minister of Finance from 1918 to 1920. Wirth became Federal Minister of Finance in 1920 and within a year of this appointment, he was made Chancellor, May 1921. He formed a government known as the government of fulfillment; i.e., one ready to comply with the obligations of the Versailles Peace Treaty.3/ Wirth's policy reportedly made him most disliked by German reactionaries. After the assassination of his Minister Walter Rathenau in June 1922, he made the now famous statement: "Der Feind steht rechts," ("The enemy is on the right"); in November he resigned. During this period, Wirth is said to have had to fight both the reactionaries and the communists and strong conservative tendencies in his own party. Since he opposed the policy of collaboration of his party with the parties of the right, he reportedly voted against his own party in the Reichstag when the Center Party formed a coalition with the German National Party. As one of the strongest Catholic party adherents of the policy of collaboration between this party and the Social Democrats, he publicly denounced the block of well established bourgeoisie which was advocated by influential members of the Center Party. Wirth is said to have been convinced that only a coalition of the Center Party and the Social Democratic Party, supported by the German trade unions, would be able to form a bastion against German reactionists. Thus identified as the leader of the left wing of his party, Wirth came into great popularity with the masses of the German left and was felt that he undoubtedly would have been elected President if not for the support of the Center Party.2/

Wirth's short-lived activities as Chancellor, none the less, included the Agreement of Wiesbaden, the World Economic Conference at Genoa, and the Treaty of Rapallo, reestablishing diplomatic relations between Russia and Germany and which is considered to have been his most significant political achievement.1/

In 1926, Wirth, together with Herman Loeb (Social Democrat President of the Reichstag) and Ludwig Haas (leader of the Democratic Party in southern Germany), created the Republican Union and the political weekly, "Deutsche Republik", in order to further the collaboration between Catholics, Social Democrats and Democrats. Although he had withdrawn from public service, Wirth visited Paris in 1928 and reportedly had long discussions with Poincaré and Briand to effect a German-French rapprochement. With Stresemann, he also represented Germany at the conference of The Hague (1929-1930).3/

In 1930 the former Chancellor accepted Brüning's offer of the Interior, although he is said to have opposed the policy of

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and favored the return to normal parliamentary government. Wirth's acceptance of this appointment was met with disappointment on the part of numerous German leftists, Democrats and Social Democrats because of their opposition to Bruening tactics. With the formation of a second cabinet in October 1931, however, Wirth was ousted from office by President Hindenburg.^{2/}

With the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, Wirth went into exile. He emigrated to Austria where he tried to prevent the break between the Dollfuss Government and the Austrian Social Democratic Party for which he was expelled. He was readmitted by Schuschnigg, but from 1934 to 1939 he resided in Paris and worked to interest the French Government in safeguarding Austrian independence. He is also said to have visited the Vatican and Poland several times on behalf of the French Government. With the Austrian Anschluss, Wirth escaped from Vienna through Italy from whence he moved to Switzerland just before the outbreak of World War II.^{3/}

The ex-Chancellor became politically active during his residence in Switzerland and by the Fall of 1943, after the fall of Mussolini, he was reportedly the center of political activity in German emigre' circles there. According to the same source, Wirth had a list of ministers ready and held the opinion that social reforms coming close to Communism could not be avoided in Germany in the future. Another report of the Fall of 1943 stated that Wirth wanted to cooperate with his friend Heinrich Bruening (then in the United States) and added that the famous German surgeon, Dr. Seuerbruch, was among the "numerous Germans" who had recently visited Wirth in Switzerland.^{2/} Wirth also reportedly visited Paris again in 1940 in order to inform the French Government of the military situation in Germany after the invasion of Norway. Thereafter, until 1946, he is known to have directed the Social-Aid Office of the German Democratic Christian Party in Switzerland, and as having founded the Demokratischer Deutschland in that country in 1945.^{1/} His Swiss address is given as having been Halden Strasse 7, Luzern.^{3/}

Wirth returned to Germany in 1946 and shortly thereafter an attempt was made to place his name on the South Baden CDU ticket at the time of the Bundestag elections. When this move was opposed by the right wing element of the party, Wirth reportedly turned to the Sammlung zur Tat by whom he was listed as a candidate for the Bundestag. He later cooled towards this party, however, by reason of its lack of financial means and its almost negligible influence in Land Baden. At the same time, he left the way open for further collaboration with its leaders in the light of its possible future importance in Baden.^{1/} In the Fall of 1948 he reportedly was one of the founders of the Union der Mitte of Arthur Ketteres" (a Catholic trade unionist before 1933 who, since the war, has been a willing tool of the Communist front VVN, Association of Persecutees of the Nazi Regime).

In 1949, having reestablished his residence in his home state of Freiburg im Breisgau, Wirth was made an honorary president of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Badener (Land Association of Working Committee of Citizens of Baden), demanding the restoration of Land Baden within its historical frontiers. This move reportedly came as a surprise to many people as speculation was rife concerning Wirth's sincerity, it being rumored that he wanted to eventually split the Baden CDU by forming a People's Party. ^{4/}

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On 26 January 1950, Wirth appeared at a "Schumacher manifestation" and rather severely criticized Chancellor Adenauer. The former Chancellor has been personally antagonistic towards Adenauer as far back as 1933, considering him a separatist and a reactionary. Wirth's criticism caused acute displeasure to the CDU in Baden as a result of which he was described by a party member as being ambitious, egotistical, and anxious to acquire popularity at any price. Subsequent to this speech, Wirth's participation in the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Badener reportedly diminished. It is felt to be significant in this respect to note that his pamphlet "Wohin, Wohin Badenerland?" was issued under his own signature and not under that of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft which refused to sponsor it.1/

In the early part of 1951, Wirth is said to have broken his leg while in Switzerland and not being able to move about, held meetings at his home where he talked with the men who were interested in the reconstitution of the Baden Center Party. Among these were Prelate Fockr, Father Blum, Dr. Herman Person (son of the Baden Landtag President), State Supreme Court Justice Paul Marcher, union leader Gustav Maurer, and a school director, Karl Eidel. Dr. Wirth had always favored this reconstitution, and it is felt that he would probably have played an important role therein had he not already been talking about going to Berlin.

In November 1951, the former German Chancellor reportedly spoke with French officials in Baden and discussed various aspects of German national policy. He felt that attempts for the reunification of Germany were being sabotaged, and that all efforts in this direction were doomed to failure so long as the initiative was left to Chancellor Adenauer. He stated that he had written directly to his old friend President Houis immediately following Grotewohl's proposals in September 1951, requesting that he give them careful consideration. Wirth himself is said to have received representatives of the East German Government at his home and supposedly offered his personal assistance towards facilitating the opening of negotiations between West and East Germany.

In spite of contrary advice of his friends, Wirth made a trip to Berlin in December 1951 in an alleged effort to help along the German reunification negotiations. A more unexpected outcome of his journey was his letter of 1 January 1952 to the Bundestag and the Bundesrat urging them not to pronounce themselves on the Schuman Plan without first consulting the German people. He stated that the political and economic consequences of the Schuman Plan would threaten the peaceful status of the German people and that the heart of German industry would be converted into a foreign war industry, further hindering the development of its own peaceful export industry.1/

Although Wirth claims that he made the Berlin trip on his own initiative 5/, other reports hold that his visit was on the invitation of the East Berlin Mayor, Fritz Reuter, acting on the initiative of Karl Schirdewan, head of the "West" section of the SED.6/7/ It has also been suggested that the initiative for the trip may have emanated in part from a so-called "Tauroggen Group" in West Germany. In any event, the SED was reportedly suspicious of Wirth's motives in accepting the invitation, and supposedly believed that his purpose was not cooperation with the

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eastern bloc but the exploration of Soviet intentions in Germany. It is pointed out that Wirth put most of the emphasis of his conference with Russian rather than German officials, and that the questions he put to Minister Grotewohl, Semenov, and Chuikov, indicated that he was chiefly interested in Soviet policy.7/ During his visit, Wirth also called upon other leading East German officials including Wilhelm Pieck and his old friend, Otto Muechko. He met, too, with several members of the Government from South Germany, he being from South Germany, such as Heinrich Rau and Ludwig Stiedle.5/ Ernst Lemmer of the Berlin CDU also maintains that he received a telephone call from the former Chancellor during the latter's stay in Berlin.8/

According to SED sources, the Russians are said to have thought that Wirth is laboring under many illusions regarding the independence of German foreign policy, but on the whole, were satisfied with his visit, believing that even if Wirth did not adopt the Communist line, the propaganda effect on the West German bourgeoisie made the project worth-while.7/

Wirth's Berlin visit, however, was deemed of little aid to the Communist propaganda campaign in West Germany, despite his alleged reputation among the older members of the Catholic and middle class circles. Except for the KPD, the West German parties reportedly reacted with mixed scorn and regret that the former Chancellor should have permitted himself to become the dupe of the Communists. While the Communist invitation was regarded as an attempt to utilize the former Chancellor to foster anti-rearmament sentiment within the Center Party, the Baden Center group declared that Wirth was not a member of the party and disclaimed any responsibility for his discussions with East German officials.1/

Upon his return to West Germany, Wirth announced at a press conference that he was planning to form a "movement" for German unity through free elections. He stated that Chuikov and Semenov had assured him that the "USSR would not use the veto against all-German elections and their result," and maintained that the East German politicians were full of the best intentions. In this respect, he was quoted as praising Grotewohl for having placed German unity at the head of his Government's program which he claimed was free of any charges of nationalism. Wirth also said that he had found an earnest desire on the part of the responsible East German officials to solve the German problem via free elections, a desire which he was not convinced existed in Bonn as a result of his experience with President Heuss.9/10/

Maintaining a position of neutrality, the former Chancellor has identified his efforts with other neutralist elements in West Germany such as the Wessel-Heinemann group and Pastor Niemoller.10/ Responsible West German correspondents who participated in Wirth's press conference, however, concluded that in view of his complete acceptance of the Communist line, it was doubtful whether Helmut Wessel, Dr. Gustav Heinemann, or Pastor Niemoller would be prepared to associate themselves directly with him. An unconfirmed report also linked Wirth with Professor Ulrich Haack and the Catholic Circle, but the ex-Chancellor denied any connection with Haack and his group.11/

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REMARKS: (Continued)

West German officialdom as well as the West German press and public opinion appear to be rather unanimous in deploring Wirth's lapse into the status of a Communist tool.^{11/} They feel that he is a naive, foolish old man, still living in the past, who is unaware of present-day political realities and of the true character of Soviet objectives.^{12/} The general opinion of the Office of the French Commissioner for Land Baden is that the ex-Chancellor's action was primarily based on his feeling of self-importance. It is thought that he sees himself as the hero he was under the Weimar Republic, and that he is convinced that he can help bring the West and the East together and effect another Rapallo. In any event, Wirth is regarded as having little if any political influence, a "spent political force."^{13/} One source has it, nevertheless, that he still is a very important political influence, especially in the ranks of the Center Party, which, it is felt, would not be loath to listen to, and possibly act upon, his ideas about unifying the Western and Eastern branches of the Party.^{1/} Possibly of a more serious import, however, is the Wessel-Heinemann collection of types like Wirth and Niemöller in their anti-rearmament program and their vulnerability to Soviet line.^{13/}

SOURCES:

- 1/ State, D-unnumbered, USLO Baden, 19 January 1952, Confidential.
- 2/ OSS Report, 12 May 1945, Restricted.
- 3/ US Government Biographical Records, 30 September 1943, Restricted.
- 4/ State BI files, Confidential.
- 5/ CIA, FBIS, #32, USSR & EE, 13 February 1952, Restricted.
- 6/ CIA, FBIS, #3, WE & NE, 4 January 1952, Restricted.
- 7/ CIA, SO-79927, 14 January 1952, Secret.
- 8/ State, T-864, Berlin, 29 December 1951, Confidential.
- 9/ State, T-915, 14 January 1952, Berlin, Restricted.
- 10/ CIA, FBIS, #11, USSR & EE, 15 January 1952, Restricted.
- 11/ State, T-unnumbered, Berlin, 10 January 1952, Confidential.
- 12/ State, T-873, Berlin, 3 January 1952, Plain.
- 13/ State, T-935, Bonn, 3 January 1952, Confidential.

The information contained in this report does not reflect data which may be held in the security or counter-intelligence files of CIA or any other US Agency.

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